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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 000292

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: PARTIES BOYCOTT PM'S MEETING ON PEACE
INITIATIVE

REF: KATHMANDU 0198

1. (U) Five of the six parties that had MPs in the previous Parliament boycotted a February 17 meeting called by Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand to discuss Government of Nepal (GON) efforts to begin negotiations with Maoist insurgents. The all-party meeting, which the GON had billed as an effort to brief and consult with the parties on its peace initiative, drew attendance only from Deputy Prime Minister Badri Prasad Mandal's Nepal Sadbhavana Party, along with representatives from a host of smaller, non-Parliamentary parties. Citing the lack of participation from Parliamentary parties, PM Chand's own National Democratic Party (RPP) stayed away from the meeting as well, although RPP General Secretary Pashupati S.J.B. Rana reportedly met with the PM one hour before the scheduled all-party meeting as an apparent compromise.

2. (SBU) The Nepali Congress (NC) Party (Koirala) did not attend the meeting because the party has not recognized the constitutionality of Chand's interim government, according to NC Party member Basant Gautam. Gautam added that the NC will formulate its own position on possible peace talks with the Maoists after the Feb. 19 Democracy Day holiday. RPP Central Committee Member Khem Raj Pandit told the Embassy that while his party is "positive" about the peace process and stands ready to assist in any way it can, it did not attend the meeting because of the presence of non-parliamentary parties. Chaitya Raj Shakya, Central Committee member of the far-left Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, told us that his party had boycotted the meeting both because it does not recognize the Chand government and because it believes an all-party meeting should not include parties not represented in the previous Parliament. Instead of the current Chand government, an all-party government should be formed to address negotiations with the Maoists, he added.

3. (SBU) Comment: The major parties criticized the January 29 announcement of the ceasefire between GON forces and the Maoists for its lack of "transparency" (Reftel)--which, in Nepal's political shorthand, translates to the parties' collective disgruntlement at the interim government bypassing them to take the initiative in seeking a peaceful resolution to the insurgency. This initial GON effort toward greater "transparency" has obviously failed to mollify the parties or to appease their fears of marginalization. The GON knows it will need the support of the principal political parties in order to engage successfully with the Maoists. So far, however, GON overtures to win such support continue to founder on the parties' refusal to deal with the interim Chand government.

MALINOWSKI